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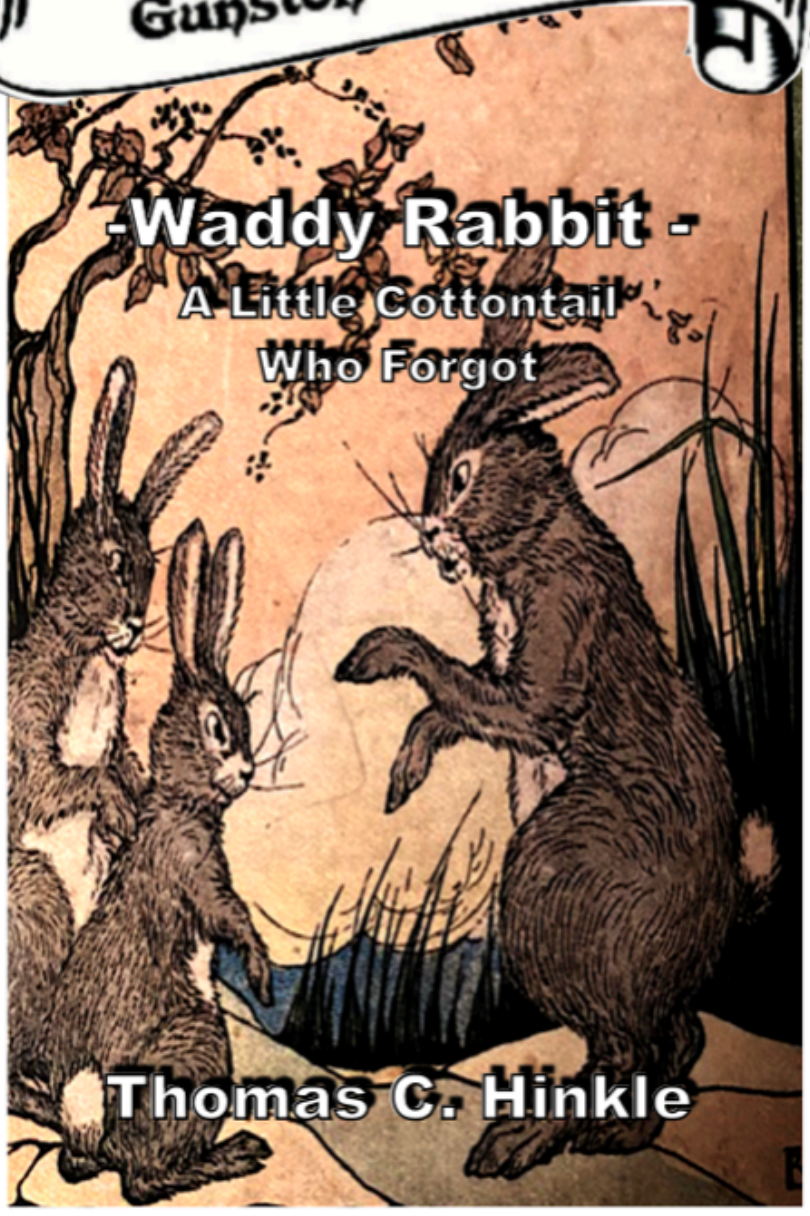

-Waddy Rabbit -

A Little Cottontail Who Forgot

Thomas C. Hinkle

Gunston & The Book Bunnies
The Gunston Trust

Gunston Classics

Waddy Rabbit

A Little Cottontail Who Forgot
By Thomas C. Hinkle
Frances Beem - Illustrator
1922

Second Edition

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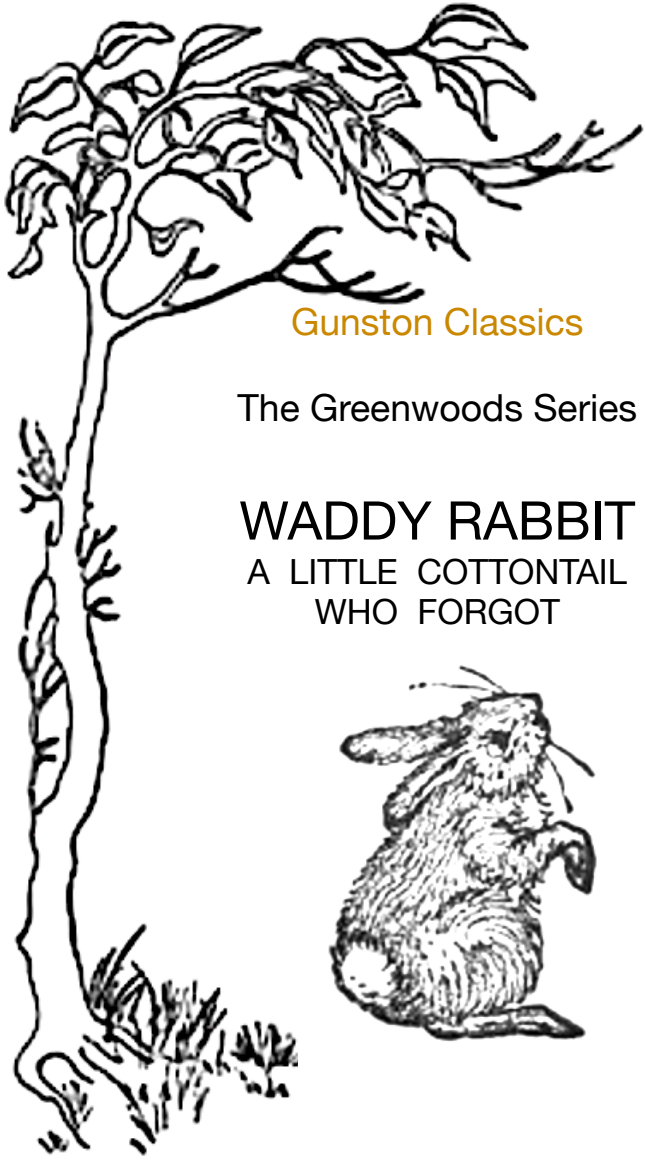

Gunston Classics

The Greenwoods Series

WADDY RABBIT

A LITTLE COTTONTAIL WHO FORGOT

1

WADDY RABBIT
A Little Cottontail Who Forgot

WADDY RABBIT IS LOST

It was a fine moonlight night in the Wide River Valley. Waddy Rabbit sat hunched up on the river bank looking and listening for somebody for all he was worth. The truth is, Waddy Rabbit was lonely. He was lonely because he was lost from Molly Cottontail and Tiny Cottontail. And worse and worse, he knew it was all his own fault. He had forgotten to do as Molly Cottontail had told him. He remembered well enough now what she had said.

"Waddy Rabbit, you must never, never run away to look at anything until you first ask me about it." Oh yes, he remembered well enough now, but he did wish he had remembered a little sooner. "Dear, dear me!" he said. "If ever I find Molly and Tiny, next time I'll certainly be more careful."

So there sat Waddy on the bank of the river, lonely and all hunched up in a bunch, trying to think where he might find Molly and Tiny. Once or twice he thought he saw some one moving out on the moonlit meadow. But he finally decided he only imagined it. He scratched his ear with his left hind foot and tried to decide where to go. He knew of at least two places where Molly and Tiny might be, and he was trying to decide which place to got first. Then all at once he thought of another place where he might find them. They might be in the Big Green Woods, on the Green Hillside, or out in the Wild Plum Bushes.

Waddy made up his mind to try the Big Green Woods. "Perhaps," said Waddy, "I may meet someone who has seen them." And off he started, lickety-split, across the meadow toward the woods.

Now Waddy Rabbit can run awfully fast, but he can't keep it up for a long distance. No one knew this better than he did. So he ran to the edge of the woods as fast as his legs could carry him. Then he stopped to rest a bit in the shelter of a friendly thicket and to listen for any sound from his friends.

But Waddy didn't hear a sound. And my, how dreadfully lonely the woods did seem! He kept his eyes wide open and hopped slowly along until he came to the Crystal Spring. Then, hopping still more slowly, he went over to the Tinkling Brook, cocked up his right ear, and listened. But all he could hear was the low murmur of the rippling brook.

"Let me see!" saidd Waddy Rabbit. "Maybe they're in the Green Brier Patch. I'll just hop-skipping all the way. Waddy was so anxious to get to the Green Brier Patch he forgot all about his enemies. He knew the big Green Brier Patch was as safe as safe could be, and he thought of nothing but getting there as fast as he could hop. And this came very near being the last of Waddy Rabbit. For just as he was passing a dark tangled thicket, something big and black sprang right at him.

Waddy Rabbit was almost scared out of his wits. But he wasn't so scared he forgot to use his legs, and that saved his skin. He darted rapidly this way and that, but all the time the big, black something was right at his heels. Then all at once, Waddy made a big, big leap, and landed safely in the Green Brier Patch. He had been so excited he hadn't had time to see who was after him until he was in the safe patch. Then who do you think it was?

Old Mrs. Lynx, the most dangerous person in the Big Green Woods! Yes, it was, and my but wasn't she angry! She walked round and round the Brier Patch, angrily poking her nose in here and there, trying to get at him. Waddy just sat there, a little gray bunch, trembling all over.

Then all at once a dreadful fear came over him. What if old Mrs. Lynx had eaten Molly Cottontail and Tiny Cottontail! His heart thumped so hard it was nearly bursting. How he wished old Mrs. Lynx would say something! Then by and by she trotted off, mumbling, "I might just as well give up hope of getting his fine meal. And I'm awfully hungry, too. In fact, I'm just about starved. I haven't tasted a bite since last night. Well, I'll try hunting over near home. Maybe I shall have better luck there."

And stepping ever so softly, away old Mrs. Lynx went. She didn't make a sound as she

trotted along. Now stepping softly is just what make old Mrs. Lynx a dangerous enemy. It is hard to tell where she is until she is almost upon you. Just as she was out of sight, Waddy Rabbit heard a samall, squeaky voice near a big dead stump say, "Thank goodness, she's gone at last. Now I can get to work."

It was Waddy's little friend, Squeaky Woodmouse, talking, and Waddy Rabbit hopped over to the stump in a great hurry, crying out, "Hello there, Squeaky! Have you seen anything of Molly and Tiny Cottontail around here?"

At the first word, Squeaky scuttled back into his hole, but he bustled out again when he saw who it was. "You nearly scared me stiff, Waddy Rabbit," he said. "And only a moment ago old Mrs. Lynx nearly frightened me out of my skin. No, I haven't seen Molly and Tiny and this is my busy day. I'm trying to get a new home fixed up in this stump, and so you'll have to excuse me, Waddy Rabbit. I've got to get back to

work." Then Squeaky Woodmouse seized a nice dry grass blade and ran with it into his hole. Waddy watched him until he had carried in three grass blades. Then feeling lonelier than ever, he hopped of to search for Molly and Tiny.

But, believe me, there was one thing he was mighty careful not to do. He didn't go the same way old Mrs. Lynx had gone. He looked all around him as he went, too and kept very, very close to thickets and grapevine tangles. If he found Molly and Tiny Cottontail in the woods, he knew he would have to get mighty near them before he could see them. They would be on the watch for enemies too. But Waddy was hoping he might meet a friend who had seen Molly and Tiny. Then suddenly his heart gave a big, big thump and jumped right up in his throat. Not far away stood old Mr. Woodrat cracking a nut. Waddy Rabbit does not feel any too easy when he is near old Mr. Woodrat, so he kept his distance.

"Have you seen Molly and Tiny Cottontail?" he asked him.

"Yes, they ran but not long ago and called out that they were looking for you." And paying no further attention to Waddy, old Mr. Woodrat crunched the nut noisily.

2

HOW WADDY RABBIT CAME TO BE LOST

Waddy Rabbit stood still a minute thinking about what old Mr. Woodrat had said. "If only old Mr. Woodrat wasn't so afraid he'd talk a little!" grumbled Waddy Rabbit. "But that's his way. He's always as short and cross as old Grumpy Bear. Anyway, I don't care to get too close to him. So Molly and Tiny were looking for me! Well, that's a bit encouraging. I'm looking for them, and they're looking for me. Looks as if we'd find one another soon."

And Waddy Rabbit went hopping along his way, looking and listening as hard as he could. Now Waddy Rabbit was really, truly ashamed of being so careless. He remembered quite well just how he happened to forget. You see, Waddy Rabbit is very, very curious. So when he saw something at the edge of the woods, a long way from where he and Tiny and Molly Cottontail were eating their supper, he felt he just must know what it was. So away he ran without saying one word as to where he was going. In fact, he ran away so quickly neither Molly nor Tiny Cottontail missed him until he was out of sight.

Now if you believe me, what he found after all was only a big black stump! Waddy Rabbit ould only stand up on his hind legs and look foolish. Of course he should have gone right back. But of course he didn't. He is so very, very curious that when he finds a strange place he always goes snooping around to see

what he can discover. Waddy thought he'd stay only a minute, but the first thing he knew, it was night and the big round moon was peeping over the Green Hillside. Then he began to think about Molly and Tiny. First he looked for them near the Wide River, for that was where he had left them.

Then, because he was lonely and disappointed and worried, Waddy Rabbit did a very natural thing - he got angry and tried to put the blame on Molly and Tiny.

"I don't see why they didn't look for me sooner," he said crossly. But just as soon as he said it, he felt ashamed.

The more Waddy Rabbit hunted for his little friends, the lonelier he got. He knew way deep down in his little rabbit heart he had no one to blame but himself. And by and by he said, "Yes, it's all my own fault. Nobody else is to blame. Now what was it old Mr. Woodrat said?

Oh, yes, he said, Molly and Tiny were hurrying through the woods hunting you." Yes, that's exactly what he said. And now I must hunt and hunt and hunt until I find them, and tell Molly that I'll never, never do it again."

And when Waddy Rabbit had said that, he felt a great deal better, and could think better, too. That was a mightly good thing for Waddy. For he thought of old Mrs. Lynx, and no sooner had he thought of her than he saw her. That was the trouble about her you never knew where she would be. This time she was scrambling up a big cottonwood tree. Waddy Rabbit "froze" stiff right in his tracks. He sat there still as a stone just as Molly had taught him to do when he wanted to see somebody and not be seen himself. Old Mrs. Lynx climbed nimbly up the tree trunk. In the bright moonlight, Waddy could see her as plain as day. She had something in her mouth. At first he was badly frightened, for

Waddy Rabbit saw old Mrs. Lynx was carrying something in her mouth

he was sure it was Tiny Cottontail. But the next minute he hopped gleefully away. It wasn't Tiny Cottontail at all. It was a horrid old weasel. Weasels, you know, are not friendly to rabbits, little or big. And that's why Waddy felt so gleeful when he saw what old Mrs. Lynx had. Mrs. Lynx was just going into a big hole in the cottonwood when Waddy hurried off. He knew now, for sure, where old Mrs. Lynx lived, and that was enough for him. And my, when he found Molly and Tiny, wouldn't he have some news that would surprise them! He surely would, unless sharp-eyed Molly knew it and told Tiny. Now more than ever, Waddy Rabbit wanted to find Molly and Tiny.

3

WADDY MEETS DOWNY SCREECH OWL

After Waddy Rabbit came upon old Mrs. Lynx the second time, he was mighty nervous. Old Mrs. Lynx had a quiet way of creeping through the woods that was enough to make anybody nervous. He saw her go up the trunk of the big cottonwood with the weasel, but he didnlt know how soon she might come down again. Oh yes, Waddy Rabbit was glad old Mrs. Lynx had caught the weasel. He certainly was. A weasel is more dangerous even than old Mrs. Lynx herself. Even when he saw old Mrs. Lynx all ready to make a meal of it, Waddy shuddered.

"Now I have some more news for Molly and Tiny," said Waddy, as he hopped along through thw woods. "And mighty good news it is, too." All of a sudden Waddy Rabbit heard a dreadful noise right over his head. It startled him so he almost jumped out of his little gray skin. It was so near by and so sudden that it would have frightened 'most anybody alone in the woods at night. But when Waddy Rabbit looked up, he knew in a flash who made the horrid noise. It was nobody but Downy Screech Owl perched on the limb of an old elm.

"Shr-rr-rr-rr! Shr-rr-rr-rr! called out Downy again.

"I know who you are now," said Waddy Rabbit. "But you 'bout scared me to death."

"Sher-rr-rr-rr!" Downy Screech Owl teasingly called back. "I did, did I? What's the matter with you, Waddy?

You seem dreadfully nervous tonight. Shr-rr-rr-rr! Shr-rr-rr-rr! What's the matter?"

"

"Matter enough, Downy Screech Owl, matter enough," spluttered Waddy Rabbit. "I'm looking for Molly Cottontail and Tiny Cottontail, and they're lost. Have you seen them?"

"Shr-rr-rr! Shr-rr-rr! You don't say so!" exclaimed Downy Shrilly, "Well, now Waddy Rabbit, I wonder how that happened. I wonder if you haven't been running away again without saying anything to Molly about it!"

"What if I have, can't you answer me? " said Waddy Rabbit crossly.

That tickled Downy more than ever and his tantalizing call of "Shr-rr-rr-rr" rang out once more. "Oh, I know," he said. "I know all about it, Waddy. You might as well own up."

"Well, I'd just like to know how you know so much," said Waddy. "Now I guess you're stuck!"

"Shr-rr-rr-rr! Shr-rr-rr-rr! called Downy louder than ever. "Now that's a good joke on you, Waddy Rabbit. You think I don't know?

Well, maybe I do, and maybe I don't. But I rather think I do. Anyway, I heard Molly Cottontail say so. Ah, ha! what have you to say to that?"

"You did! When did you hear her say that? asked Waddy excitedly.

"Oh, about two minutes ago. I was sitting right on this limb when she said it. She said you had gone away again and forgotten to say anything to her or Tiny about going."

"Where did Molly and Tiny go? Quick, quick, tell me!" said Waddy Rabbit.

"Shr-rr-rr-rr! Shr-rr-rr-rr!" teased Downy. "Did you forget again? Now 'fess up. You'll have to tell me that first."

"Oh, w-e-l-l I w-e-l-l, than I did. Now where did they go.

"Well they said if I saw you, I was to tell you to go right out to the Wild Plum Bushes on the Wide Meadow. If they're not in the bushes

when you get there, you are to stay until they come.

They . . ." But Waddy Rabbit didn't wait to hear another word. He dropped his big ears flat to his back and started on a run for the Wild Plum Bushes that grew in the sandy pocket away out on the Wide Meadow.

"Goodness!" eclaimed Downy, "he's going like a streak!" And that was just exactly what Waddy was doing. There was no doubt about that. He ran through the woods, clearing them in a jiffy, and then out across the Wide Meadow toward the Wild Plum Bushes. He was in far to big a hurry to think of danger, but when he was halfway across the meadow he had to think of it. For suddenly a great dark shadow loomed over him in the moonlight and swooped down to seize him.

4
OLD SOLOMON MISSES HIS SUPPER

Quick as a flash, Waddy Rabbit had seen the dreadful shadow hanging above him in the bright moonlight. This time he did not have to wonder. He knew it was Old Solomon the Great Horned Owl who lived in the woods down in a bend of the Wide River. It was certainly a fearful time for Waddy Rabbit. He ran and dodged and ran again with all his might. Old Solomon was mighty hungry, and he was sure he was going to make a meal of Waddy Rabbit. But Waddy Rabbit was a wonderful dodger. He reached the Wild Plum

Brushes and darted in under them. He was so frightened and so tired that for a minute he could hardly breathe. But he certainly was happy when Molly and Tiny came under the bushes nosing right up to him.

"Well! well! well!" exclaimed Molly and Tiny both at once. "So at last we have found you, or you have found us! You don't know how dreadfully worried we have been," said Molly.

"Whew-ee-ee!" breathed Waddy Rabbit, grinning a bit. I've been a little bit worried myself. Whee-ee-ee! I know now I'll never forget again. Twice tonight I've nearly been caught."

"Yes, it was dreadful when that old horned owl was after you. But who else chased you?" asked Tiny Cottontail

"Another owl?" asked Mollyl

"No, it wasn't. It was somebody much worse than Old Solomon the Great Horned Owl."

"Goodness!" shivered Tiny. "It must have been that nasty weasel."

"No," said Waddy Rabbit, "but it was someone who got that nasty weasel, and someone who ate him all up."

"Old Mrs. Lynx!" guessed Molly.

"That's exactly who it was." said Waddy. Molly and Tiny forgave Waddy even if he had been a little forgetful.

"Tell us all about it, Waddy," urged Tiny.

"Alll right," agreed Waddy, "but I'm still afraid of Old Solonmon the Great Horned Owl. I wonder if he's still hunting for me!"

"No we are as safe as safe can be under these Wild Plum Bushes," Molly told him. "Don't be a bit afraid, Waddy Rabbit. But do tell us about old Mrs. Lynx. How long since she tried to catch you, and where were you?"

And just as fast as he could chatter Waddy Rabbit told them all that had happened. "Just think of that!" said Molly Cottontail. "You certainly had a narrow squeak, Waddy Rabbit;

you certainly did. And now I'm curious to know about old Mrs. Lynx. Why did she take the weasel up that big cottonwood? And why did she stop at the big hole?"

Waddy Rabbit and Tiny Cottontail thought a minute. Then Tiny said, "I can't think of anything except that old Mrs. Lynx was probably going in that hole to eat the weasel."

"Perhaps she was," agreed Molly, "but I've a notion something else made her go up the tree and into the hole. Couldn't she have gobbled up the weasel right where she pounced on him, if she wanted to?"

"Why, of course she could," said Waddy Rabbit, his eyes wide open with surprise. "I wonder why she didn't!"

"I can't think why she didn't," said Tiny, wriggling his nose. "Why didn't she, Molly?"

"Well, suppose we wait a bit and see," said Molly. "I don't say I really know why, but I think I do, and it makes me feel mighty shaky

even to think about it. Maybe I'm right, and maybe I'm wrong, but if it's what I'm afraid it is, we'll find out soon enough."

5

WHERE OLD MRS. LYNX LIVED

There's one sure thing about Molly and Tiny Cottontail and Waddy Rabbit; no matter how cloudy the night or bright the moon, Molly and Tiny and Waddy have to eat just the same.

And one fine thing about Waddy and the Cottontails is that in spite of all their narrow esapes, they never worry. No, sir-ree, they don't worry. They just go right along having a good time and eating whenever they are hungry. And so, as soon as Old Solomon the Great Horned Owl flew away, Waddy Rabbit

said, "I'm just about starved. Come, Molly and Tiny, let's go up on the Green Hillside and help ourselves to a square meal."

"That suits me exactly," said Tiny, and as Molly herself was hungry, she said, "All right, let's go."

It was only a little way to the foot of the hill, and they ran there in a jiffy. About half way up the Green Hillside there was a clear little spring that sparkled in the moonlight. Here they stopped for a drink. And as Waddy Rabbit wrinkled up his nose and drank, he wondered more and more about old Mrs. Lynx and what Molly Cottontail had said. As he hopped along eating the tender green grass he wondered harder than ever. You see, Waddy was a very young rabbit and he had a great deal to learn. Molly was older and wiser and knew the ways of the woods. Yes, Molly Cottontail was very, very wise. Both Tiny and Waddy knew this. Tiny knew a bit more than

Waddy Rabbit because Tiny was a little older. You see, being a little older means a very great deal in knowing about things in the Big Green Woods and on the Wide Meadow.

Waddy Rabbit hopped up near Tiny and whispered, "I just can't guess what Molly Cottontail thinks about Old Mrs. Lynx. Why did old Mrs. Lynx take the weasel up the tree?"

"Well, said Tiny, "that is just what I'm thinking about, Waddy Rabbit and I haven't even a guess."

"What do you say, Tiny, let's ask Molly Cottontail," urged Waddy Rabbit.

"No use," said Tiny. "When Molly has a idea about a thing, you might just as well wait until she finds out if she's right. And she generally is right. And so, no matter what she may think now, I feel mighty sure she's right But if we let her know we are trying so hard to find out for ourselves, perhaps she may drop us a hint. I'll try her."

So Tiny Cottontail went over to Molly and said, "Molly, Waddy Rabbit and I are thinking for all we' re worth about what made old Mrs. Lynx take the weasel up in the big cottonwood."

"That's fine!" Molly laughed. "That's surely fine! Keep right on thinking. That's just what I want both of you to do." But when she saw how badly puzzled Tiny and Waddy were, she said, "Maybe I can help you in your thinking. Anyway, I may as well tell you that I saw the Lakin Boy up in the Big Green Woods a day or two ago, and I heard him say, 'Lynx tracks! Whew-ee! then I followed him around a little, and I saw him stand and look for a long time at a big cottonwood tree. It was partly dead and high up in the trunk there was a big hole. At last he chuckled and said to himself, 'So that's where she lives! I think I know what's happened and now I know what I'll do. I'll be back soon."

"Oh, I see," said Tiny. "He meant he had found old Mrs. Lynx's home!"

" Think so," said Molly. "I think he meant something else, too, and that makes it interesting, but at the same time mighty dangerous. And I dont think the Lakin Boy feels quite sure himself yet. But he's going to find out, and I shouldn't be surprised if he comes back as soon as it is light to see if he is right."

"Dear me!" exclaimed Waddy. "I can't make head nor tail out of all this!"

"Sh! Sh! Sh! Listen!" said Molly. "Hide! Someone is coming!"

Waddy knew it wasn't Old Solomon the Great Horned Owl whose home was in the woods down in the bend of the Wide River. No that old chap didn't get out nights and throw stones at a moonlit hillside.

It waasn't Spangle the Silver Fox, either. Oh no, Waddy was quite sure it wasn't spangle

for Spangle was more than twice as big as the stonethrower.

And it surely wasn't the weasel from the Big Green Woods. Mrs. Lynx had already finished him. And it wasn't any of his cousins, either. Whoever it was, he was much larger thatn the weasel. No it wasn't a weasel or a weasel's cousin, that's for sure.

And then all at once the noisy somebody came a little nearer. He came so near that Waddy Rabbit saw him pick up a stone, then jump forward quickly and seize something. He raised his hear as if eating what he had ccaught.

"Dear me!" shuddered Waddy Rabbit. "This somebody may want to make a supper of us yet." But Waddy was curious, and so were Molly and Tiny. And they all wanted to find out who the prowler was. Then Waddy thought of something that for minute nearly scared him stiff. "I wonder," he said with a shudder, "If it's that mink from down along the Wide Rive! I'm so little he'd finish me in a hurry."

Waddy Rabbit saw the noisy somebody pick up a stone

"Don't be afraid of that mink, Waddy Rabbit," whispered Molly. "He never comes this far from the river. And he never throws stones nor hunts at night. Don't get excited. It's not a mink out on the Green Hillside, I can tell you that for certain."

"Well, dear me! Who is it then?" asked Waddy.

"Yes," joined in Tiny, "who is it?"

"Watch and wait," Molly said. "I've a notion right now who it is, but I'm not quite certain, and we must not make any mistakes."

Rattle! Clatter! Bang! went another stone.

6

LITTLE SPOTTED SKUNK GOES HUNTING

You know how it is when you want very much to find out about something. You keep thinking every minute you're going to succeed. Well, that's how it was with Waddy Rabbit as he peeped round the stone on the Green Hillside. The air was still cool. Fresh dew covered the grass on the hillside and sparkled in the clear, white moonlight.

It was because the air was so still that the clatter of the stones seemd so loud. And when the air is still and the moon bright, Waddy Rabbit's wits always seem to quicken. But think as he would, he just couldn't solve the puzzel as to who the stranger was. Then growing desperate, he thought of something awfully bold and whispered it to Molly. "Let's shout out loud to him and then run away."

"Don't you do any such thing, Waddy Rabbit!" warned Molly Cottontail. "Don't you dare! You just keep still. I'm growing less and less frightened every minute. I'm almost sure I know who it is, but wait a bit longer. I might be mistaken. We may have to run. But wait just a little longer. I'm sure we'll know who it is very soon."

Then something happened that made Waddy Rabbit turn a little flip-flop for pure joy.

"Well! well!" he heard the noisy stone-thrower say. "It's a fine night. I wonder where Molly and Tiny Cottontail and Waddy Rabbit are. I haven't seen them for ever so long. I'd like to say 'Hello' to them."

Out they all scampered shouting, "Hello there, Little Spotted Skunk! Hello!"

Yes indeed, that's exatly who it was, Little Spotted Skunk. And it was his turn to be nearly scared out of his wits. "Gracious me!" he exlaimed. "You nearly made me jump out of my skin."

"Well we had to get back at you, for you nearly scared us out of a year's growth," laughed Waddy Rabbit. "What are you rattling and banging these stones for?"

"Well that's a fair question to ask, Waddy Rabbit," chuckled Little Spotted Skunk. "But suppose you keep your eyes open and see for yourself what I'm doing." Quick as a wink, Little Spotted Skunk flipped a small flat stone over, and pounced upon two bugs which had been hiding under it. "Just watch me, Waddy Rabbit. Just watch me getting a good meal. that's what I'm after."

"I thought all the time it was Little Spotted Skunk," said Molly Cottontail,

"and as soon as I heard him speak, I knew what he was doing."

"So did I when he spoke," said Tiny Cottontail proudly. "I've seen him out hunting before, but somehow, this time I couldn't be quite sure it was Spotty."

"Well, I didn't mean to scare anybody," said Little Spotted Skunk good-naturedly. "I don't like to think of scaring anybody. Anyway, I was about scared out of my wits myself tonight. It was over in the Big Green Woods. That's why I'm out here."

"Who got after you?" they all asked in chorus.

"Old Mrs. Lynx. She rushed at me, but when she saw who it was, she backed

off in a hurry. Now I don't really think she would try to eat me, but just the same I don't like her looks. Anyway, I'd just as soon not hunt where she is, so I decided to leave her to the woods and the Lakin Boy, who seemed very much interested in her. Yesterday I heard him say he was coming up to the Big Green Woods tonight."

"Are you sure he said tonight?" asked Molly, cocking up her long ears and opening her eyes very wide.

"Sure I am," chuckled Little Spotted Skunk. "But why do you care whether it's tonight or tomorrow night? Anyway, I know he's coming up the Wide River in his boat tonight. I heard him say so, and when the Lakin Boy says he's going to do a thing, he'll do it."

"That's so," said Molly. "and he may be on his way up right now. We'd better be going if we want to make sure."

"Good-by, Little Spotted Skunk! See you later!" shouted Waddy as they ran toward the Wide River.

7

SOMEBODY ROWS UP THE WIDE RIVER

Swish! Swish! Swish! went the water just as Molly and Tiny and Waddy reached the fringe of trees along the Wide River. They wanted dreadfully to see who it was but they were all afraid to pop right out in plain sight on the bank, so they ran and hid in the woods and listened.

"What's making that noise?" Waddy Rabbit wanted to know.

"Someone is coming up the river in a boat," answered Molly, and the noise is made by his oars as he dips them into the water.

"Then I'm sure it's the Lakin Boy. Let's run out and take a good look at him!" said Waddy excitedly.

"Don't be in too big a hurry, Waddy Rabbit," said Molly. "You must learn to be more cautious. Better wait a bit till we know who it is. It might be the Laken Boy and it might be - well, it might be a dangerous enemy. Remember, Waddy Rabbit, whoever he is, we must be very, very sure to see him before he sees us. If Little Spotted Skunk was right - and I'm

pretty sure he must have been - it's time the Lakin Boy was coming up the river in his boat. But let's be very certain about it. You see, Waddy, it may be Old Jordan the Hunter."

"Goodness me! I hope it isn't," shuddered Tiny.

Swish! Swish! Swish! again went the water as the boat moved upstream. The boat was certainly pretty near the shore.

"Come!" whispered Molly. "We'll follow the river through the woods and watch what happens."

"I'm going to keep out of sight until I know for certain," declared Tiny. "If it's Old Jordan the Hunter, he always has his gun ready."

"That's so," said Waddy Rabbit. "That's so. And I'm going to keep close to Molly and do just exactly as she tells me."

Pretty soon the swishing stopped and they heard a sound like a chain being tossed on the bank.

"There!" exlaimed Molly. "He's going to get out and fasten his boat to a tree."

Molly led the way to the shelter of the little bramble tangle and said, "Now both of you stay right here. Don't you move while I"m gone. I'll find out who this is and be right back. And away she hopped.

"Goodness!" shuddered Waddy. "I hope we don't see old Mrs. Lynx while Molly is gone."

"She can't get in here, anyway," whispered Tiny, "but I'll be mighty glad myself to see Molly come back. I hope she doesn't see old Mrs. Lynx.

It sounded as if someone were walking through a dense thicket near where the boat was landed. Then everything was very still. The moon shone brightly over the Big Green Woods. The little beams pierced down through the bramble tangle and made little spashes of light on Waddy and Tiny. They huddled close together and kept as still as two little gray mice. Suddenly their hearts jumped and every hair on their little backs stood straight up. Something right beside them let out a terrible yowl. The next minute old Mrs. Lynx slunk

along close to the bramble tangle. Again she gave a dreadful yowl. She does that often when she's out hunting at night, and nothing else sends the cold, cold shivers running through Waddy Rabbit and all his cousins, big and little, like that horrid, snarling yowl.

Old Mrs. Lynx stood still and looked around. "You just wait till I see a rabbit!" she growled. "There's at least one of them in these woods. I know because I had a chance at him. I never was quite so hungry in all my life as I am this very minute." To prove it she yowled louder than ever. You could hear her all over the Big Green Woods. Then off she trotted in the direction Molly had gone.

"Dear, dear! wasn't that terrible?" gasped Waddy Rabbit.

"It surely was, and I'm scared nearly stiff," Tiny Cottontail said. "But she didn't see us, Waddy. It's a mighty good thing old Mrs. Lynx can't see as well as Spangle the Silver Fox, for if she could, I'm afraid we wouldn't be here now. I certainly hope Molly keeps out of her way.

8

OUT OF THE BRAMBLE TANGLE

Waddy and Tiny, two little gray bunches, sat under the bramble tangle and shuddered. As long as old Mrs. Lynx was in the woods, Waddy knew there was danger ahead for them. And no matter how badly frightened he was or how much he wanted to run, Waddy Rabbit knew he must stay right where he was and wait as Molly had told him to do. Of course, if old Mrs. Lynx had tried to get

into the bramble tangle - we'll Waddy Rabbit would have to run. That's all there is to it, and so would Tiny. It wouldn't do to let old Mrs. Lynx get too near. No siree! She might get in all the rest of the way. When an enemy got close and was all the time getting a bit closer, Waddy knew there was only one thing for a little rabbit to do - run! Only his legs could save him.

Of course, Molly had told both of them to wait right where they were. But nobody knew better than Molly Cottontail that it's all right to plan where you must hide and stay, but sometimes some one whispers to you to do something entirely different, That's Mother Nature. Once in a great while she seems to make a mistake, but you'll learn Old Mother Nature never makes mistakes. And Waddy and Tiny have learned that when Old Mother Nature seems to make a mistake, it's always in their favor; and that's pretty fine. Now, if you make a mistake, always make sure you make it on the safe side.

Old Mother Nature whispered to Waddy and Tiny to sit still while old Mrs. Lynx was going by. Now if old Mrs, Lynx had started into the bramble tangle, she would surely have told them to hustle and run out on the other side.

All of a sudden Waddy and Tiny heard a soft rustling among the dead leaves outside the bushes. They both peered out and in a flash saw that it was old Wriggler the Big Black Snake. And mercy me, he was coming right toward them! Then quicker than you could say "flip," Waddy and Tiny ran back through the woods toward the Wide River.

They ran like the wind to the fringe of woods along the Wide River and hid under a wild gooseberry bush. "Dear me!" Tiny panted. "I wonder what Molly will do when she gets back and finds us gone!"

"Well, we couldn't help it, that's for sure," wheezed Waddy Rabbit. "We just had to run. If only we can find her!

That's the only thing to think about now."

"Why!" exclaimed Waddy Rabbit. "Look out there!"

Tiny looked and saw a boat tied to a tree. "Now we'll have to be mighty careful here," he said. "Maybe trhat boat belongs to Old Jordan the Hunter. Don't you think we'd better get right out of here?"

"Yes, I do," answered Waddy. "Let's hustle back to the bramble tangle. Old Wriggler wouldn't stay around there very long when he found there was no chance for a meal."

They started slowly, peering about them carefully as they went. The air was still and the moonlight made the open places bright as day. An enemy might be lurking behind every tree and under every

Waddy and Tiny ran like the wind to the fringe of woods along the river.

bush. There was no telling where Old Wriggler the Blacksnake was, and there was no telling where old Mrs. Lynx was, not to mention a good many other night prowlers who were out looking for a square meal.

They had nearly reached the bramble tangle when a loud "Who-oo-oo! Who-oo-oo! Yoo-oo! rang out, and they rushed to the nearest bushes, followed by "Who-oo-oo! Yoo-oo! They knew it was Old Solomon the Great Horned Owl who lived down in the woods in the bend of the Wide River.

"Gracious!" shivered Waddy. "So Old Solomon's come up here now!"

"Yes, and he's pretty sure to stay all night," whimpered Tiny.

"Yes, he nearly always stays all night when he comes," said Waddy. "Now we shall have to watch out!"

Then Tiny and Waddy turned their backs to each other and sat perfectly still, just as two

friendly little cottontails always do when they want to see what's happening all around them.

9

SOMETHING QUEER COMES INTO THE BIG GREEN WOODS

It seemed a long time to Waddy Rabbit and Tiny as they waited patiently for Molly. Waddy asked himself over and over again if old Mrs. Lynx or Solomon the Great Horned Owl had caught Molly. But just when Waddy and Tiny were feeling the worst, in came Molly.

"Well! Here you are!" she laughed. "I was so worried about you after I met Old Wriggler

the Blacksnake and Old Solomon. My, but I'm glad to see you here safe and sound! I have good news for you. Good news, indeed!"

"What is it?" they both asked at once.

"Guess," said Molly.

"The Lakin Boy is in the woods," guessed Tiny.

"That's exactly it," answered Molly, "and he's brought along with him the queerest thing you ever saw. That's what kept me so long. I was trying to find out what it was and what the Lakin Boy is going to do with it. He brought it in his boat and then dragged it quite a little way through the woods. He has some fine scheme on hand. I know he has by the way he keeps humming to himself. I can always tell when he has his mind set on doing some special new thing. Then he always hums. I can't guess what it is, but it's something interesting, I'm sure or the Lakin Boy wouldn't be spending his time on it."

"What did the queer thing look like as he dragged it through the woods?" asked Waddy.

"I can't tell you," said Molly. "I never saw anything like it before."

"Was it - is it - alive?" Waddy asked hesitatingly.

"Oh no," laughed Molly Cottontail. "It isn't alive, Waddy Rabbit. It's a big dark-looking thing, and the Lakin Boy seems to be setting it up. I heard him say he wanted to have it all ready before daylight."

"Well! Well!" said Waddy Rabbit excitedly. "There will be eough to think about now."

"There certainly will," declared Tiny, "and I'm mighty glad of it. I just know the Lakin Boy is going to do something fine and dandy. He always does. I can hardly wait to see what it is."

"Is the Laking Boy all alone?" asked Waddy.

"Yes, you know he usually comes up to the woods alone," replied Molly, "when he wants to work out something fine. He must be pleased with his new plans, for I heard him chuckle to himself and say, "I'll surprise the woods people this time. I'll stay until I do it, too."

"But how can we find out what he's after?" asked Waddy.

"Why just watch him, Waddy Rabbit, just watch him. That's what we must do. We'll hide pretty close to him and watch everything he does," replied Molly.

"Do you think he's going to hide too?" asked Tiny curiously.

"I'm sure he's going to," said Molly. "Right now he's hiding that curious thing he brought with him. He's putting it under the bushes so no one can see it. He stopped and looked around every now and then to make sure no one was watching. I'll bet when daylight comes we'll find

him hidden in a thicket not far from that curious thing, and watching for all he's worth."

"Let's slip up that way and keep an eye on him to see where he goes," said Tiny.

"That's a good idea, Tiny," said Molly. "Let's do it ." And we must be as quiet as mice. We don't want to upset his scheme. Anyway the nearer we stay by the Lakin Boy, the safer we are. Old Mrs. Lynx won't dare bother us when he's around.

10

MOLLY COTTONTAIL MAKES A DISCOVERY

Well as it happened, Molly Cottontail was right. Just a wee bit after daylight Molly and Tiny and Waddy saw Tom Lakin steal into a leafty thicket not far from the spot where he had placed the queer-looking thing the night before.

Waddy and Tiny looked at the queer thing. They had never seen anything like it before. They couldn't guess what it was, or what Tom Lakin meant to do with it. And Molly Cottontail, who is wise in the ways of the woods, had only the faintest sort of an idea about it. It was so

faint that she didn't even mention it, for fear she might be wrong , as wrong can be.

Peeping out from the thicket where they were hiding, they could see Tom Lakin. Something long and dark lay beside him. Waddy Rabbit thought it was a snake. He wanted to shout out and warn Tom that Old Wriggler the Blacksnake was right beside him. He whispered it fearfully to Molly.

'Sh! Sh!" Molly warned him. "Don't you worry. The Lakin Boy has sharp eyes. Don't think for a moment that Old Wriggler the Blacksnake could get that close to him without being seen. Besides, Old Wriggler wouldn't lie that still. No he wouldn't! No, it's something the Lakin Boy brought with him. Maybe he's hid something else in the thicket, too. One thing's for sure, he's not sitting there waiting and watching for nothing. No siree, he's not! He's looking for somebody. That's as plain as the ears on your head, Waddy Rabbit." Then as they

sat there, Molly looked up and saw that the Laking Boy was staring at the old dead cottongwood tree with the big hole in its trunk. In fact, he seemed to be looking right into the hole. And between you and me, that's just what he was doing. Then, looking again, Molly Cottontail made another discovery. The lower part of the old cottonwood was still covered with bark, and Molly saw that some of this had just been pulled from the trunk. She could see spots as plain as day.

"Look!" Molly whispered to Waddy Rabbit and Tiny Cottontail. "Keep you eyes wide open and look at that old dead cottonwood. That's what the Lakin Boy is watching."

Waddy Rabbit looked straight at the hole and so did Tiny. Then at the same time, both saw where the bark had been peeled off, and Waddy exclaimed excitedly, "It looks as if

somebody had just climbed up to that hole."

"That's exactly it," Molly whispered, "and the Lakin Boy knows more about that tree than we do. There's something in that hole, or he's waiting for something to go into it. We can be sure of that. He's got some plan and I'll bet you it's old Mrs. Lynx he's thinking about. Yes, I bet it is."

"Goodness!" said Waddy Rabbit as he shivered all down his furry little back and so did Tiny. Just to think of old Mrs. Lynx is enough to make any little rabbit shiver.

Again Waddy Rabbit stared at the queer-looking thing Tom Lakin had hidden in the thicket. He wondered what it could be. He felt mighty sure it had something to do with the big dead cottonwood. But what it was - well, Waddy gave up. Waddy and Molly and Tiny were nearly sure the cottonwood was old Mrs. Lynx's home. They weren't certain of it, to be sure. But Waddy had seen old Mrs. Lynx climb that tree

with the weasel, and that looked very much as if she made her home there. And Molly Cottontail, who was very wise , believed she did. And the longer Molly looked at the Lakin Boy, sitting so still with his eyes on that hole in the tree, the surer she was. Now there was one fine thing about Tom Lakin. He was wonderfully patient. He could sit still in one spot until it seemed he'd grown fast there.

11

WHY JOEY FLICKER CHANGED HIS MIND

The longer Waddy Rabbit sat and looked at the hole in the big dead cottonwood, the surer he felt that any minute old Mrs. Lynx might pop her head out of it. And that's just how Tiny felt about it too. Wise Molly Cottontail just watched and waited. But the longer she sat and watched, the surer she was that Tom Lakin was looking for old Mrs. Lynx. She was surely on the right track. For Tom always does a lot of looking and thinking before he makes up his mind, and so usually he is right.

Yes sir, he keeps his eyes and ears wide open in the woods. He doesn't go to the Big Green Woods to kill things. He goes there to watch them. If he gets into danger, he knows pretty well how to take care of himself. A dead creature doesn't interest him, but a live one does. But there's one creature even Tom thinks we would be better off without, and that's Old Wriggler the Blacksnake.

They saw the Lakin Boy move his head ever so little. He surely saw something. At first Waddy Rabbit thought he, too saw something at the dark hole in the dead cottonwood. But it was only Joey the Flicker. Joey lit on the trunk of the cottonwood and drummed loudly. "Come here! Come here!" he shouted to Mrs. Flicker. "Here's a fine place to make our home. The wood is just right." Thuterrrrrrrr-rrr-rrr! Joey drummed, and bored into the dead trunk.

Mrs. Flicker came up and sat on the trunk beside him.

"See how the wood flies!" exclaimed Joey.

But Mrs. Flicker cocked her head on one side and looked at the dark hole in the tree.

"This is no place to make a home, Joey. Look at that hole!

"My goodness!" exclaimed Joey. "It's Old Mrs. Lynx 's home, just as sure as I'm Joey Flicker!" And with that away they flew.

Right then Waddy Rabbit learned another lesson. He learned from Mrs. Flicker to keep his eyes wide open all the time. Joey flicker is a little careless now and then. He is good at hunting a home place, and he works hard to build a nest. But Mrs. Flicker always thinks first of the little Flickers who for a time must live in that nest. So, no matter where Joey wants to live, she looks the place over and decides if it will do. And Joey always does as she says. That's what he did this time. And he probably felt a little bit sheepish and ashamed of his carelessness, too.

After the Flickers had gone, the woods were very quiet. But not for long. Something is always happening in the woods, although you don't always see it. SPLASH went something, and Waddy and Tiny very nearly jumped out of their skin. Molly Cottontail chuckled, but she jumped a bit too.

"What was that?" whispered Waddy Rabbit, standing up on his hind legs to look out.

"Oh, it's only old John Bull Frog," whispered Molly.

"Oh I see!" said Waddy Rabbit. "I hadn't noticed that little puddle out there."

Then Tiny stood up on his hind legs and looked, It wasn't such a little puddle, but it was surrounded by thick bushes that almost hid it. They saw the Lakin Boy was looking at the puddle, too. That made Molly cottontail stand up and look. Molly knew it paid to look where the Lakin Boy looked. Sure enough, John Bull

"Oh, it's only old John Bull Frog,"
whispered Molly

Bull Frog had a good reason for plumping into the water. In fact, he had a mighty good reason. Old Wriggler the Black snake, he head held high, was crawling along the bank. He was out looking for John Bull Frog. My, but he must have been disappointed when he missed him! It made even Molly shiver when Old Wriggler raised his head a little higher and seemed to be looking straight at them.

12

WADDY RABBIT THINKS HE SEES THINGS

It was a trying moment for Waddy and Tiny and Molly when Old Wriggler raised his head so high and looked about. It certainly was! For they were sure he looked straight at them. Suppose he should start their way! There would be only one thing for them to do - run, and run fast, too -- faster than they had ever run before. But they didn't move. Waddy and Tiny could hear their heats beat so loudly they were afraid Old Wriggler would hear them too.

After a long, long time, Old Wriggler crawled away from the Tinkling Brook. Then all at once Waddy Rabbit remembered something. He remembered he was very, very thirsty. You know how it is when you want a drink so badly you can scarcely wait for it. Well, that's just the way Waddy Rabbit had been feeling forever and ever so long! You see, don't you, when Waddy Rabbit is thirsty, he feels just as you do. Now it seemed he just must have a drink of clear, cool water from the brook. "My!" he said. "I've just got to have a drink."

"Me too," said Tiny. "I've been nearly dying for a drink a long, long time."

Molly was thirst too, so she said. "We'll slip out very quietly, get a good drink, and then come right back."

As they crept softly along under the vines, Waddy Rabbit whispered, "I don't see how the Lakin Boy stands it so long without a drink of cold water."

"Oh, he's so busy over his plans he forgets all about being thirsty," replied Molly.

"Now let's hurry along, for we don't want to miss seeing anything he does.

They hopped down to a cool, sandy spot at the edge of the brook, and began taking sips of the clear, cool water. They didn't gulp it down. Oh no, indeed not! They knew it was best to drink slowly.

Near the bank stood a big flat rock, and Waddy Rabbit jumped and with one long leap landed on it. Rabbits always keep their eyes wide open while drinking, and Waddy watching from the rock could see much farther up the brook. And he certainly did a wise thing when he hopped out on the big rock. If he hadn't done so, he couldn't have seen what he did. He had taken only a few sips of cold water when back to the bank he leaped in a great hyrry.

"Goodness!" he exclaimed in a frightened whisper. "Some one is sneaking along the bank and making right for us."

"Quick! Quick! Get back to the bramble tangle," said Molly. Away they all raced, and soon were lying safe and snug under the vines. They waited and waited, but nothing happened.

Then Tiny Cottontail said, "Maybe Waddy Rabbit was excited and just thought he saw something."

"Now don't you fool yourself, Tiny Cottontail," said Waddy Rabbit.

That was as far as Waddy Rabbit got, for just at that moment they all saw something. And this time there wasn't the least bit of doubt about it. The creature stealing slyly up along the brook came so swiftly they couldn't be quite sure who it was, but they all thought they knew.

Perhaps Old Mother Nature was telling them. Anyway, without a word spoken they all thought the same thing. They kept their eyes

on the leaves moving in the thicket near by, and quite forgot all about the Lakin Boy.

Tom Lakin seldom misses seeing anything that's going on around him. He had seen the twigs and leaves in the thicket moving as soon as Molly and Waddy and Tiny. And he was now looking toward the thicket with sharp, keen eyes. Then, all at once, every one's eyes opened wider and wider. Out of the thicket and bast the bramble tangle trotted old Mrs. Lynx.

"Well," she muttered, as she went by, "it's queer where those three perfectly good rabbits went. I was sure I saw them come up here. I need them for my children's dinner. Then looking at the big dead cottonwood, and seeming to think that everything was all right with her family, Old Mrs. Lynx trotted off into the woods again. As she hustled along, she muttered to herself that she just had to find a rabbit before she went home.

13

TOM LAKIN CAPTURES THE LYNX KITTENS

Now when old Mrs. Lynx said she wanted to find a rabbit for her children, she told Molly and Waddy and Tiny just what they had been wanting to find out. And though they had all wanted to know if the Lynx babies were in the dead cottonwood, it really frightened them a bit to learn the truth.

And now Molly Cottontail thought of something even more exciting. She wondered why she hadn't thought of it before. She

wriggled her nose and her eyes danced with excitement as she whispered to Waddy and Tiny. "Now I know what the Lakin Boy is after. I'm just as sure as anything. He's after those Lynx kittens."

This was surprising news, but just the same it was good news. Waddy and Tiny had to think a minute before they could say anything. Then Waddy Rabbit said nervously, "I certainly hope he is, but -- well, Molly, how do you know he's after old Mrs. Lynx's kittens? He can't catch them by just sitting there looking around."

"You just wait, Waddy Rabbit," chuckled Molly. "I'll wager my new winter coat it's true. Sitting there and watching is a part of it. Look at that queer thing he has hidden under the bushes over there. He's going to get out of that thicket and do something with it pretty soon. You just watch and see."

Before Molly had stopped speaking, Tom Lakin was on the move. As he went out of the

thicket he picked up the long dark thing that Waddy had thought was Old Wriggler. It was just a gun. A gun is a pretty dangerous thing, but Molly and Waddy and Tiny were not afraid of one when the Lakin Boy held it. He had passed them many a time with his gun in his hand, and had only laughed when they hopped quickly away. Molly and Tiny and Waddy just couldn't believe the Lakin Boy would fire a gun even at old Mrs. Lynx. Perhaps they wouldn't have felt very sorry if he had, but they knew he would always rather look at live animals than dead ones. They wondered about that gun though, and why he had it.

Then Molly whispered, "I know the Lakin Boy is not going to fire his gun at old Mrs Lynx unless he has to. But she's fierce if anyone meddles with her children. The Lakin Boy knows that as well as we do, so he isn't going to take chances. He's going to play safe.

As Tom Lakin left the thicket, he picked up a light ladder and a stout sack. Walking quietly to the cottonwood, he placed the ladder against the tree, then up the ladder he went right toward the big black hole, taking the gun and sack with him. Looking quickly into the hole, and then around to see if old Mrs. Lynx was coming, he pulled out a kitten and chucked it into the bag. All this time his gun was lying in the crotch of a limb near the top of the ladder. As he dropped the second kitten into the bag, he heard a loud squeaking over near the Tinkling Brook. He looked up quickly, but it was only two big wood rats fighting over a black beetle.

Again he reached into the hole and brought out another kitten and dropped it into the bag. My, but it was exciting for the three rabbits! In fact, it was so exciting that both Waddy and Tiny lost count of the kittens as Tom pulled them out. Evern Molly wasn't sure whether it was three or four he had dropped

into his bag. At this time they were holding their breath for fear old Mrs. Lynx would come tearing through the woods and get after the Lakin Boy.

14

AN EXCITING CHASE

Watching the Lakin Boy pulling old Mrs. Lynx's kittens out of the hole in the big cottonwood certainly was an exciting adventure. The Lakin Boy was a bit excited himself. Tom had had many thrills in the Big Green Woods, but this was the biggest. You see he was not a hunter who went to the woods to kill things. He was what we call a naturalist, and he always felt a little thrill of pleasure in watching a wild animal when it could not see him. He had learned to keep cool no matter what happened.

Between you and me, Tom Lakin had known for a week that old Mrs. Lynx lived up in the big dead cottonwood. He knew too, all about her babies up there. He had watched her before from the very thicket where Waddy and Molly and Tiny had seen him. But the three rabbits didn't happen to know this. One day while watching old Mrs. Lynx from this thicket, Tom Lakin had thought out a plan to capture the whole Lynx family.

Now he reached into the hole and pulled out the last of the kittens. This one began to squall and then to fight like Tom Wildcat. It tried to scratch and bite the Lakin Boy as he chucked it into the bag. "Just four of them!" said Tom as he picked up the gun and bag and started down the ladder.

You see, he was too wise ever to forget and leave his gun behind him. He hoped he wouldn't have to use it, but he was going to have it handy if he needed it. Tom wanted more than old Mrs. Lynk kittens, he also wanted old Mrs. Lynx.

Yes, the Lakin Boy imagined he could get the whole Lynx family, so he had made a plan and was now working it out. The most wonderful thing in the world is imagination, if you use it, and there is no better place to practice using it than in the woods.

Tom dropped to the ground with the bag and gun, and started on the run for the queer looking thing he had hidden in the thicket. Then all at once something happened, and it looked as if his fine plan might fail, after all. That fourth kitten kept squalling and clawing in the bag, and before Tom could say scat, it was out and tearing through the bushes. It ran into a dense thicket, and it looked as if Tom was going to have a lot of trouble trying to catch it again,. Then, too old Mrs, Lynx might come back any minute.

The Lakin Boy left the little kitten and ran over to the queer-looking thing in the thicket,

dropped the bag with the other kittens into one end of it, and let down and fastened a little door there. Then, with his gun in his hand, he started on a run after the kitten that had got away.

Waddy and Molly and Tiny looked at the thing into which Tom had dropped the kittens. It was made of small poles placed very close together and looked like the fish traps Tom made, only it was shaped like a long box. Waddy Rabbit saw that the Lynx kittens had got out of the bag in the end of the trap -- yes, it was a trap -- where Tom had put them. They were walking round and round, all the time peering out through the small spaces between the poles, and trying to get out. Waddy and Tiny and Molly certainly had enough to look at now! It kept them busy and they didn't know which way to look first -- at the kittens held fast in the trap, or at the Lakin Boy chasing madly here

and there through the thickets after the one that got away.

Time after time Tom thought he had his hand on the kitten, when away it slipped and the chase would begin all over again. Now it came lickety-split right for the bramble tangle where Waddy and Molly and Tiny were hiding.

"Gee whilikins!" exclaimed Waddy excitedly," Let's run!

"Yes," said Molly. "You're right, Waddy. Let's run."

And out of the thicket they all scooted in a hurry. Indeed, they went in such a hurry they bumped right into the Lakin Boy. But that didn't stop them. They ran right on until they were safe in the thicket where Tom had been hiding. There they sat panting and wheezing, with little shivers running up and down and all over them as they watched Tom chase the runaway kitten.

15

MOLLY COTTONTAIL DOES SOME GOOD GUESSING

Tom Lakin hadn't been chasing the Lynx kitten very long -- through it certainly seemed so -- when all at once something happened that made him give it up in a hurry. The kitten wasn't a bit careful where it went, if only it kept going, and so the first thing Tom knew, it plunged down into a hole near an old stump. To be sure, it wasn't a deep hole for a boy, but Tom

wouldn't have gone into it for a good deal more than a runaway Lynx kitten. He might have jumped into the hole, seized the kitten, and jumped out again in a second. But where was old Mrs. Lynx? She might happen along the very moment he was down in the hole. Tom thought of this in a flash. And just then he thought he saw saomething moving swiftly through the woods toward him. You remember Tom kept his eyes open while he was chasing the kitten. That was what made the task so hard.

Turning quickly, he ran back to the shelter of the thicket where he had watched the Lynx home up in the tree. And away ran Waddy and Tiny and Molly back to the bramble tangle.

All this time the Lynx kitten down in the hole was yowling madly. Surely old Mrs. Lynx must be a long way off or she'd hear it and run to it. It certainly did seem every second that

she would come. Just then Molly Cottontail thought of something she had seen while they were hiding in the thicket.

"Did you see that long slender grapevine lying on the ground between the trap and the thicket?" she whispered to Waddy and Tiny.

"No!" they both answered excitedly.

"Well, it's there all right," said Molly. "I saw it plain enough. It was fastened to a little door in one end of the trap. The little door is open, but it's high enough so the kittens can't get out. I believe the Lakin Boy is waiting for old Mrs. Lynx to come back and find her children in that trap. My! Just listen how they're yowling! She's sure to find them, and she certainly will try to get them out. But the Lakin Boy has fixed it so there is only one way she can do this: she must walk up the trap and through the opening in the holes to the door. And if she does --

"She'd be caught! Gee whillikins! Won't she want to make somebody's fur flying, though!" exclaimed Waddy Rabbit delightedly. The Lakin Boy's plan was now as plain as day to all of them.

"That's right," Molly whispered.

"But what about the kitten in the hole? said Tiny nervously.

"I don't know what," said Molly. "That's not part of the Lakin Boy's plan. He didn't count on that happening. I think that puzzeles him, too. But anyway, he is wise enough not to try going down in the hole after that little spitfire."

"I should say he is!" said Waddy Rabbit. "I should say he is! It makes me shiver all over just to think of his going down into that hole. What would old Mrs. Lynx do if she came along and found him there?"

"My goodness gracious!" exclaimed Tiny at the very thought of it.

"Don't worry," said Molly. "The Lakin Boy is smart enough to save his own skin. He's got to wait, just as we're waiting, to see how his plan works. I've a notion we will all find out pretty soon, too."

15

HOW TOM LAKIN'S PLAN WORKED OUT

Well, Tom Lakin did not get back into his hiding place in the thicket any too soon. All of a sudden there was a rush through the underbrush, and out sprang old Mrs. Lynx. She had heard the yowling of her kittens, and she ran at once to the hole and jumped down into it.

In a moment out she came, carrying the kitten by the back of the neck. She snarled

and glared fiercely all about her. Then she heard the meowing of the other kittens, and still holding the yowling kitten in her mouth, she ran lickety split to the trap. She ran around it, staring in, and then finally sprang upon the trap. She couldn't get into it that way, so she jumped down again. Every minute she was growing angrier and angrier. There was no doubt about that.

For a moment she seemed a bit puzzled, as if she didn't know what to do. Then she decided. All at one she ran up the big cottonwood and dropped the kitten she was carrying into the hole. Her growling grew fiercer than ever now, and the look in her eyes was enough to make your hair stand on end.

Waddy and Molly and tiny just sat still, stiff with fright. But not an ear moved and not a nose wiggled. Neither did the Lakin Boy move, He sat in the thicket holding fast to one end of the long slender grapevine that was now

fixed to the door of the trap. He sat as still as still could be, He didn't even wink an eye.

He didn't have long to wait when down the tree and over to the trap old Mrs. Lynx raced. Clawing and biting at the slender poles, she tried her best to break them and get to her kittens. But Tom Lakin was too clever for her. He had thought about this very thing when he picked out those poles. He knew he must get stout ones, and he did. They were so strong old Mrs. Lynx's teeth and claws hardly left a mark on them. Now there was just one way she could get at her kittens.

Would she go in at the doorway of the trap, or wouldn't she? That was the test still to come. She was on the trap again in a jiffy, biting and clawing at the small poles furiously. It seemed as if she must surely tear them loose. But the poles held, and down she sprang and

began tearing at the sides of the trap with her teeth and claws. Then, nothing happenng, she ran around to the end of the trap where the poles slanted in like a fish trap, and started to go in.

"My!" whistled Waddy Rabbit under his breath. And it certainly did look as if old Mrs. Lynx was going in. Tom Lakin sat holding the end of the slender grapevine. He was so excited he almost forgot to breathe. He was all ready to pull the grapevine as soon as old Mrs. Lynx slipped through the round opening where the poles slanted together inside.

You see, the Lakin Boy wanted to get old Mrs. Lynx into the end of the trap where her kittens were. Then he knew very well getting the Lynx kitten out of the hold in the big cottonwood would be quick work.

Old Mrs. Lynx put her head close to the opening, jerked her short tail and growled fiercely. She was angry clear through. But she

seemed a bit suspicious of that hole. Twice she started in, only to back out again. Then she sprang up on top of the trap and sat up and looked all around. She seemed to be looking straight at the thicket where Waddy and Molly and Tiny were hiding. But she couldn't see them, and they didn't move a hair.

While old Mrs. Lynx stood up on the trap, the kittens began yowling louder and louder. This seemed to settle the matter, and at once she decided what she would do. Springing down, she ran to the opening at the front of the trap. This time she walked right up the slanting pole, jumped down, and was inside with her kittens.

Snap! Tom jerked the grapevine. Old Mrs. Lynx was a prisoner with her kittens.

Tom ran out of the thicket in a hurry, set his ladder up against the big cottonwood, and in the twinkle of an eye had pulled the little runaway kitten out of the hole. As he reached

the trap with the kitten, old Mrs. Lynx spit and growled worse than ever, and Tom still had the job of putting the kitten into the trap with the others.

16

BIDDING GOOD-BY TO THE LYNX FAMILY

The Lakin Boy stood over the trap with the Lynx kitten in his hand and watched his chance. Round and round the end of the trap old Mrs. Lynx walked, like a tiger in a cage. And the way she kept spitting and growling at Tom was a caution. Then she moved away from the little door at the top and quick as a wink, Tom raised the door and dropped the kitten in. He did it so quickly old Mrs. Lynx didn't see how it was done.

The instant the door was shut she sprang at him, but she was too late to do him any harm.

"My word, but you're mighty fierce, old Mrs. Lynx! exclaimed Tom. "You certainly are!" And for a moment he stood watching her through the little bars. There was a broad smile on his face. He was just full of thrills. "Anyway," he said, "I'm mighty glad I didn't have to use my gun. I've got old Mrs. Lynx alive, and that's just the way I want her."

"Now, old Mrs. Lynx," said Tom Lakin "you don't need to growl and spit at me. I'm your best friend. I'm going to take good care of you and your children too. But you're coming right along with me. I'm going to take you away from the woods so that I can see you and your famly every day. I'm very sure you'll find you're more welcome with me than you would be with Waddy Rabbit and Molly and Tiny Cottontail."

The Lakin Boy looked up just in time to see his three little friends of the Greenwoods all

standing on their hind legs just outside the thicket. They were staring straight at him.

"Why, hello there, Molly and Tiny! And there's Waddy Rabbit too! Tell me where you've been Waddy Rabbit. I haven't seen you for some time. You don't seem to be growing up very fast. You're the same little rabbit as ever. I suppose you're awfully glad I've caught old Mrs. Lynx and her family. I'm going to take her away from the Big Green Woods. Aren't you sorry, Waddy?" And Tom Lakin laughed,.

For answer Waddy Rabbit cocked a saucy eye at him, kicked up his heels and ran round and round in a circle. Then he stood on his hind legs, perked up his left ear and smiled knowingly at the Lakin Boy. Then Tiny kicked up his heels and did a flip-flp, he was so glad. But Molly just stood still and smiled on all of them.

"Molly," chuckled the Lakin Boy, "I see you are taking good care of Tiny and Waddy. Oh, you needn't hid, Waddy Rabbit," laughed

Tom. "I see you! I hope that you've made up your mind always to do just as Molly tells you. I'm going to take old Mrs. Lynx out of the Big Green Woods now. You may all look on if you like.

Tom had even planned how he was going to get old Mrs. Lynx and her kittens into the boat. You see he knew very well that if you really want to get something done, you must first plan it all out. Of course, he didn't know he would have such splendid luck, as he certainly did have. But he did know the thing to do was first to make a plan and then try hard to make it work.

So he got everything ready. He had fastened two long slender poles under the long trap, and now he got in between the poles at the ends and pulled that trap-like cage with old Mrs. Lynx and her kittens in it down to the river bank. Then he pulled the trap up near the boat, and after a good deal of work, he got it

into the back end of the boat where it rested earily.

Molly and Tiny and Waddy followed and sat on the bank watching him. Tom untied his boat and picked up his oars. Then he got into the boat and shoved off into the Wide River. As he did so he looked up and saw his three little friends sitting in a row on the bank watching him.

"Good-by," Molly and Tiny and Waddy!" he called, smiling and waving his hand to them. "I'm coming back soon. I want to get some more animals for my collection. But I'm always going to take the ones you don't like. Good-by! When I come to the Big Green Woods again, I'm going to bring you some nice juicy young carrots."

With that he began to row and the boat slipped down the Wide River with old Mrs. Lynx and her kittens.

"Good-by! See you again soon," he shouted back at them as he rowed quietly on down the river.

"Hurrah for the Lakin Boy!" shouted Waddy Rabbit, and turned a somersault clear over Tiny Cottontail's back, he was so happy.

"That's what I say!" laughed Tiny. And Molly was so happy she ran races with them.

"I can hardly wait for those carrots sighed Waddy Rabbit.

"I could eat a big, big carrot this very minute," said Tiny.

"Me too," said Molly. "My! Isn't it fine now? No fear of meeting old Mrs. Lynx anywhere in the Big Green Woods! Come! I'll race you to the big cottonwood!

And off they scampered.

THE END

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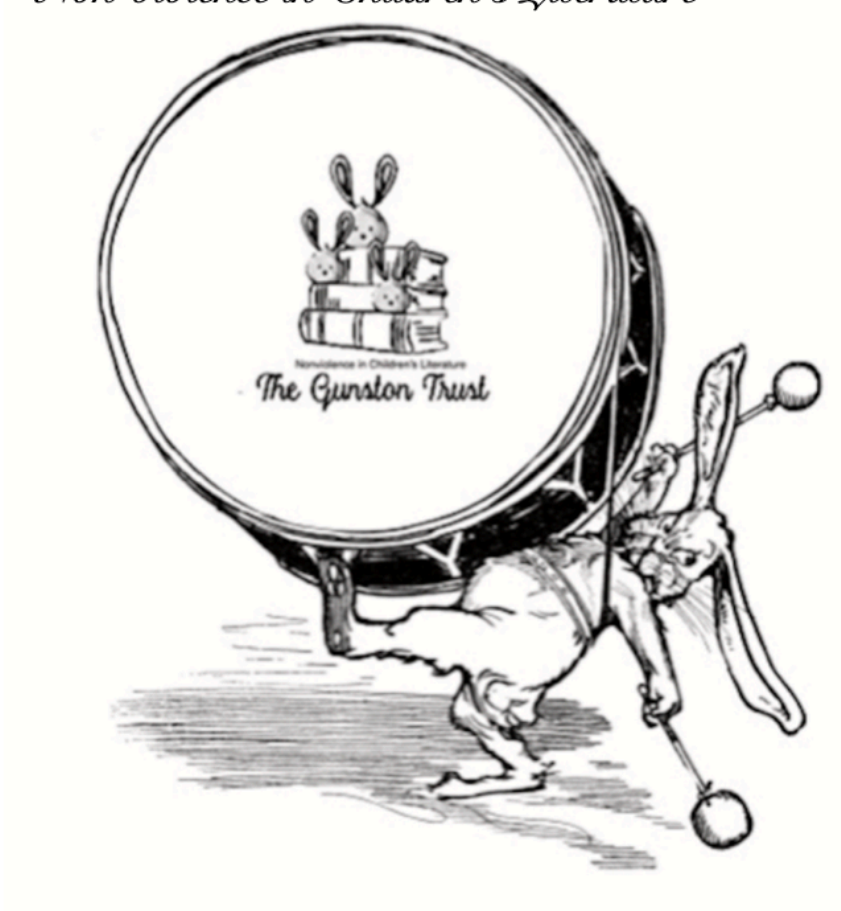
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